

DISCOVERING ABBOTSBURY



An Introduction to the Village and some Short Village Walks

Prepared by Chris Wade & Peter Evans



The Friends of St Nicholas



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USEFUL LINKS

www.abbotsbury.co.uk

Abbotsbury village website, info on businesses including arts, crafts, galleries, tea rooms, restaurants & accommodation.

www.abbotsbury.co.uk/friends_of_st_nicholas

Friends of St Nicholas website

www.abbotsbury-tourism.co.uk

The Abbotsbury Swannery, Subtropical Gardens and the Tithe Barn (Childrens' Farm).

www.abbmusic.org.uk

Abbotsbury Music, bringing high quality live music and related performing arts to our rural community.

www.abbotsburyartweeks.org

Listing and information of artists, craftsmen, galleries and exhibitions taking place in Abbotsbury



Abbotsbury Time-line

170*	} million years ago	Jurassic coast formed
100		Chesil Beach created
50		Abbotsbury fault occurred, creating the Ridgeway to the north of the village
6000 BC*		First evidence of hunters / gatherers around the Fleet
500 BC*		Iron Age fort built on ridge
44 AD		Roman invasion of Great Britain began – first mill built here
6th C		A Chapel built here by Bertulfus?
1023		King Canute gave land, including Portesham & Abbotsbury, to Orc
1044		Abbey built
14th C		Church of St Nicholas, Tithe Barn & St Catherine's Chapel
1540's		Abbey destroyed (Henry VIII), first Manor House built
1644		Manor House burned down in Civil War
1672		First non-conformist meeting place established in Abbotsbury
1765		Second Manor House built overlooking Chesil Beach
1890's		Railway opened – for iron ore mining initially, then tourism
1913		Second Manor House burned down, third one built (badly)
1934		Third Manor House demolished
1939-46		British & US forces occupy Abbotsbury
1950		Railway closed
2000		World Heritage status awarded to Jurassic Coast

* = Approximate Dating



1 An Introduction to the Village (By car)

The visitor's first impression of Abbotsbury is of a picturesque, rural village nestled between rolling hills. To fully appreciate Abbotsbury's awe-inspiring setting it is best to approach the village from the west. If you have a car (it's a steep climb on foot!) take the B3157 through the village going towards Bridport and pull off the road into one of the convenient lay-bys at the summit of the hill above Abbotsbury. From this vantage point there is a spectacular panoramic view of the village, the Jurassic coast and surrounding countryside.



From the top of Abbotsbury hill the vista looking eastwards along the Chesil Bank to the Island of Portland is stunning. Down to your right, behind a screen of trees lie **Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens** and just beyond them the **Fleet** (the stretch of water between the Chesil Bank and the mainland) broadens out in a sheltered lagoon to form **The Swannery**. As the eye moves inland, the 14th century **St. Catherine's Chapel** stands solitary upon a hill that dominates the village, its ancient terraced slopes leading the eye downwards towards the church and village.

The range of hills to the north and east of the village is known as the **Ridgeway**. This line of hills serves to protect Abbotsbury from the worst of the weather.

In winter the hills are often shrouded in mists whilst Abbotsbury basks in unseasonable sunshine. The prevailing weather generally comes up from the southwest. Storms approaching from the Atlantic rise over Start Point and deposit their rains to the west of Abbotsbury leaving the village unscathed.

This coastal stretch with its sea breezes rarely suffers from prolonged frosts or snow in winter months. "Sub-tropical" may not be a term that the local people apply to their surroundings when a south-westerly gale blows up from off the beach but the existence of the gardens with their exotic plants and trees nonetheless gives evidence of an unusually temperate climate.

On Wears Hill, to the northwest of the village and forming the western end of the Ridgeway, lies **Abbotsbury's Iron Age hill fort**. The existence of these Celtic earthworks suggests the presence of a settlement that later possibly evolved into

Abbotsbury Village. The fertile valley below the hill fort is sheltered and would have been protected by the fortification, the villagers being secure in the knowledge that they could always retreat to the safety of the hilltop if danger threatened. The hill fort is certainly worth a stroll around the ramparts.



If you cross over the road from the lay-by and take the little turning on the right marked "Ashley Chase", the hill fort lies upon the brow of the hill to the left of that lane. We suggest you explore the fortifications leaving your car in the lay-by at the top of Abbotsbury hill as there is extremely limited parking adjacent to the fort.



The views from this vantage point are unparalleled. This hill-fort is unusual in that it is triangular in shape. The two mounds on the seaward side were probably lookout points. Excavation of the fort has revealed no evidence of attack or siege yet there is evidence to suggest that there was a Roman signal tower here. It is also known that there was a beacon placed here at the time of the Spanish Armada to alert the population in case of invasion and a new basket was erected as part of the commemorations for the 200th anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar.

The fort was obviously of great importance to the Iron Age population because of its strategic location. At the first sighting of any seaward invasion the news could be passed to the other great hill-forts making up the defences of the region, notably Maiden Castle and Eggardon. Looking south-westwards from the fort provides another stunning view, this time over Lyme Bay. From this observation point it is claimed that you can see all the

way down the coast to Start Point near Dartmouth on a clear day. Drive back to Abbotsbury village. Take care when driving through the village as the width of the street varies considerably because the village was not built with motor traffic in mind. Beware of the high pavements and also be considerate of horse-riders. In the summer months especially the road can get extremely congested as vehicles far too large for our small village attempt to negotiate the narrow streets and restricted bends.



Follow the main road through the village around the comparatively gradual right hand bend then turn “sharp left” by tearooms. You are now in **Rodden Row**. The main car park is approximately 100 metres on your right just before the **Swan Inn**. Here you can park all day secure in the knowledge that you are neither obstructing anyone nor running up a huge parking fine! Being in a central location, the car park provides the perfect point from which to continue exploring Abbotsbury on foot.



2 St. Nicholas' Church (Walk – wheelchair access)

Leave the public car park heading towards the church using the little lane opposite the ticket box and turn left through the kissing-gate (see location on map, page 15) into the churchyard. Wheelchair users should exit the car park further down in the bottom right-hand corner. Pass the buildings on either side then enter the churchyard by the gate on your right and continue around the church to the north side. You are now at **St Nicholas' Church**.

Looking at the external structure of the church you will see that the general style is Perpendicular – a style that is characteristic of the late 14th-16th centuries. The difference between the aisles is very obvious. The north aisle (pictured below) is ornamented with crenulations like the tower and has pinnacles and gargoyles,



whereas the south aisle has no such adornments. The south aisle is recessed slightly, giving the impression that the aisle has been added to an older building. This is further demonstrated by the situation of the tower, which is also obviously a later addition joined to a more ancient tower buttress.

The tower, the present north wall and part of the east wall were most likely to have been built in the 14th century – at about the same time as St Catherine's Chapel on the hill and the Tithe Barn. It seems the abbot decided to build a church

adjoining the monastery church for use by the parishioners – presumably to keep them away from the monks! The two church buildings were probably under one roof span and the filled-in doorway on the south side of the church could have been where the two buildings connected. The fact that the parish church is dedicated to St. Nicholas is probably due to the saint's connection with sailors - his saint's day is 6th December.

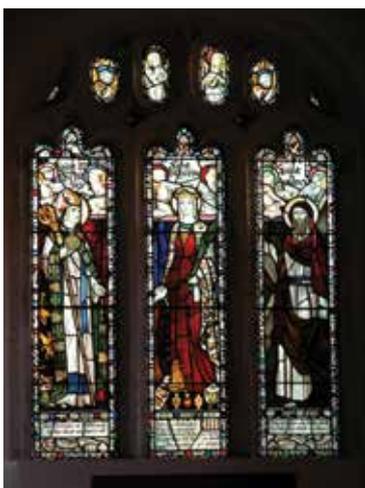
It may have been the unsatisfactory appearance of the original church that caused Abbot John to alter the whole construction in the first part of the 16th century. He unroofed the church and pulled down the south wall but left the north wall, porch and east wall, only strengthening the east wall with buttresses where the south wall had been removed.

If you now step inside the church, you will see that there is no



division between chancel and nave. The simple narrow pillars are 16th century and the windows above are of the same date. Comparing the windows provides further evidence that the aisles are of different periods.

The small medieval window panel in the south aisle is reputed to



depict St. Catherine. In 1911 Mary, Countess of Ilchester, commissioned Anning Bell to design the chancel window (pictured left) in memory of her husband and two children.

It represents St. Nicholas, St. Catherine and St. Andrew. The other stained windows are in memory of the Sellers family and were installed in the 1920's. Note the badge

of St. John's Ambulance Association in the top left window commemorating Dr. Sellers, who was a revered member of the association.

The nave has a flat ceiling (dated 1808); the brass candelabrum is English 1750. The east window was obliterated in 1751 by a huge wooden reredos, which displays the 10 commandments. The chancel has a remarkable armorial plaster ceiling dated

1638 and restored in 1986. The Strangways coat of arms (amongst others) are on its south and north side.



The font is probably original to the church but was placed in its present position by the north entrance in 1996.

The pulpit is possibly Tudor but more probably 17th century Jacobean and the heraldic arms under the canopy have been interpreted as being those of a Mr. French (a common Dorset name). Look closely and you will see bullet holes in the pulpit left by the parliamentarians when their forces

expelled a royalist garrison from the church and the Strangway's manor house in September 1644 during the Civil War.

On leaving the church via the porch you will notice a shallow carved effigy of an abbot dated to the 12th century. Opposite the porch are two medieval stone coffins of the early 14th century – you will see them against the wall on the right. They may well have been used for the burial of abbots or high-ranking members of the local community. Now turn to your left and look up at the tower. In the front, above the window, is an ancient stone carving of unknown date but believed to be from a far earlier period than the construction of the tower attests. The carving symbolises the Holy Trinity. Of particular interest is the dove portrayed above and to the right of the seated figure with the crucified Saviour between its knees. A dove is also depicted on the ceiling of the tomb of the Black Prince at Canterbury and the same Trinity effigy is also on a tomb in Derbyshire, giving us some clue as to the age of this ancient carving.

If you now walk around the outside of the church there are several other items of interest to see. Along the southern boundary wall of the churchyard is a third coffin (see below) that is particularly interesting since it has pagan symbols carved on it .



Also around this side of the church is the chancel south door that was probably constructed by Sir John Strangways in 1636. This may have been his private entrance into the church – some stone steps along the path from here may indicate the entrance to his manor house. Also in this area are numerous remnants of stone from the old abbey buildings and part of the north wall of the Abbey Church of St Peter.





Illustration : Eric Ricketts

3 The Abbey and The Great Barn (Walk – wheelchair access)

Leave the churchyard heading south, passing the remains of the north wall of the **Abbey**, and by the time you reach the gate you will actually have passed over the greater part of the **Abbey Church of St. Peter** and are possibly now standing in what was the south aisle or south transept.

In 1023 King Canute gave a parcel of land around Portesham to his trusted steward and right hand man Orc - including "Abbodesbyrig", translated from the Saxon as "Abbot's Town". Whether the name indicates the presence of earlier monastic buildings (e.g. the church of St Peter allegedly built by the monk Bertulfus in the 6th century) or simply refers to the fact that the Abbot of Glastonbury held land here is unknown.

The title deeds are contained in a document referred to as "Orc's Charter". The map overleaf shows roughly how the Portesham charter relates to present day boundaries.

Soon after acquiring Abbotsbury, Orc set about building an



Abbey. It was finished by 1044 and populated with Benedictine monks from the nearby Abbey at Cerne Abbas. After Orc's death his wife, Tola, donated all their land in Abbotsbury to the Abbey.

The new Abbey rapidly grew in wealth and influence with extra land granted to it by Edward the Confessor, subsequent monarchs and other wealthy gentry. The Domesday Book states that there were 2,500 acres and 8 manors belonging to the Abbey - over four centuries this would grow to 22 manors.

Eventually politics and religion overtook the Abbey and in the reign of Henry VIII it came to an end. In the early 1540's the estate was acquired by Sir Giles Strangways from the King with instructions that the great Abbey and all its buildings be destroyed. Later the Strangways family built a manor house on or near the Abbey site, using much of the redundant stonework,

but this was blown up by the Parliamentarian troops in 1644. The Strangways had backed the wrong side but Charles II subsequently restored the Abbotsbury estate to the family and it remains with them to the present day. The old Abbey stone helped to build Abbotsbury and you will see some of it as you discover the village.

In front of you is the largest remaining part of the Abbey – a section known as the Pynion End (pictured right).



It was possibly a gable of the monks' refectory and may have become part of the Strangways' manor – it is all that survived after the Civil War. Unfortunately most of the historical records relating to the abbey were also destroyed along with the mansion and we therefore have very little information as to how the abbey functioned. Very occasionally some long lost records do surface, as was the case recently with a copy of a breviary from the abbey dated at around 1400 (see below). Recovered from abroad it now resides in Lambeth Palace Library and it details the divine services as recited by the monks and also records commemorations of the abbey's founders – Orc and Tola.



To the left of the Pynion End is a group of buildings, known as Abbots Ward, now converted into a private dwelling. They are quite ancient and contain several interesting 14th century windows – it is believed that the Abbey Chapter House may have been here.

Opposite these buildings is Abbey House that stands on the site of what is considered to have been the old monastic infirmary and portions of the house are ancient.

If you have tea in the garden of Abbey House you will see the high wall that has doorways and windows in its length and is reputed to be an original wall of the monastery buildings. In the northeast corner of the garden stands the Old Mill House – believed to be the only surviving Benedictine water mill in this country. Excavations have revealed that a Roman water mill existed prior to the monk's arrival and it appears to be of



Romano-British construction. The building to the southwest of the garden is the old granary.

Looking down the hill past the Pynion End you will see the thatched roof on The Great Barn or Tithe Barn. As the wealth of the Abbey increased so did the requirement to store the "tithe" payments – one tenth of the harvest payable to the Abbot by all the local farmers. The great barn was probably built in the early 14th century at around the same time as St Catherine's Chapel



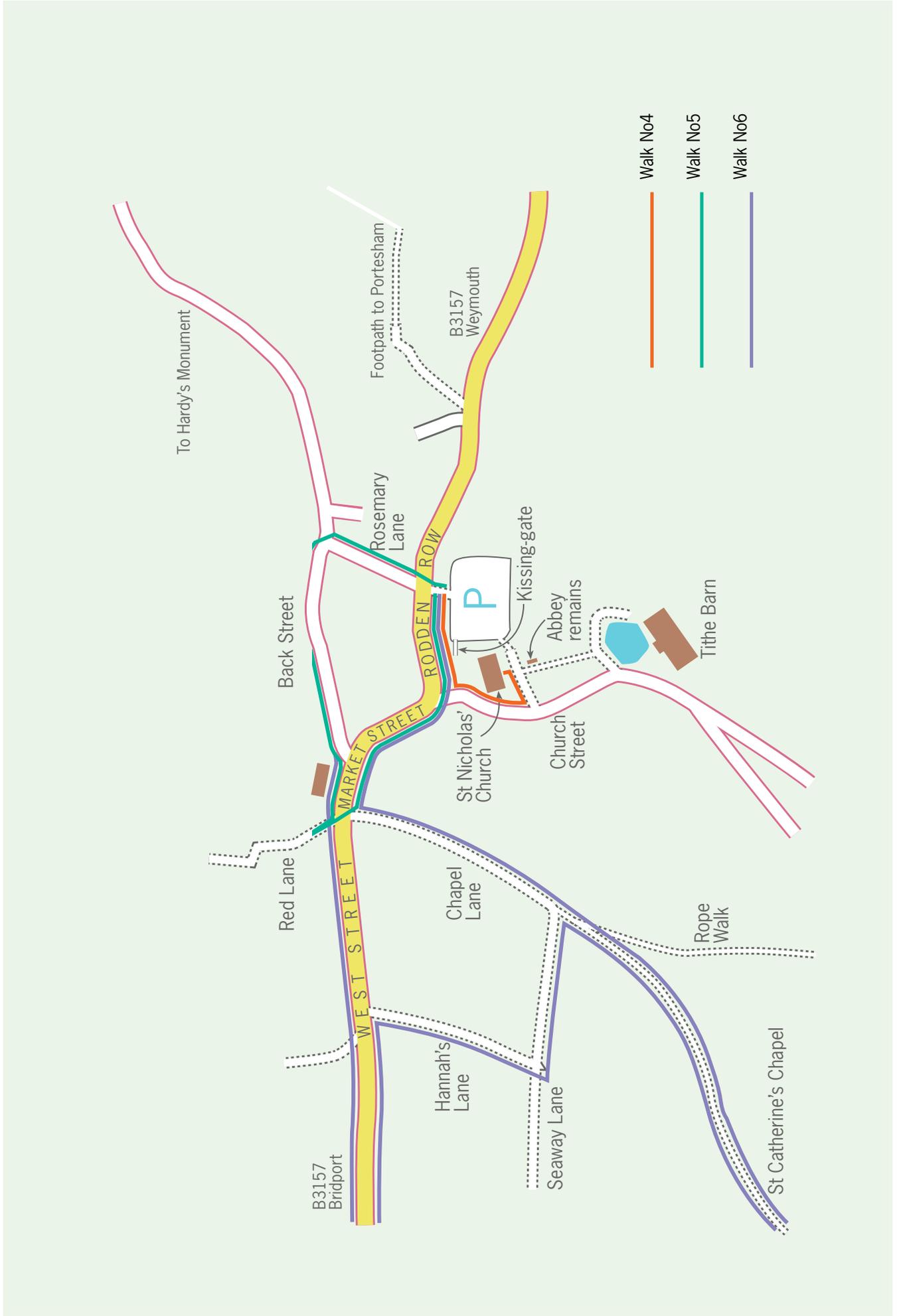
on the hill and, at 272 feet long and 31 feet wide, is reputedly the largest barn of its type in England, if not Europe.

The thatched roof we see today covers only half the original building although records suggest it has been like this for several hundred years. Why was it only partly destroyed? One theory is that the east end belonged to the abbey whereas the west end may have belonged to local farmers. Once the Monastery was destroyed then perhaps the Abbey part of the barn was also demolished and a new end wall erected creating a smaller barn for local farmers and the incoming tenants who would have needed somewhere to store grain and reed from their new estates.

Although originally under a stone roof the barn has been thatched for several centuries. The latest re-thatching was completed in 2006 - it took three years to complete and involved substantial repair to the roof structure (above). The work has been carried out using similar materials and skills to those used for the original construction including water reed from the Swannery for the thatch – three years' reed harvest has been used, some 11,000 bundles.

The barn yard was used as one of the locations for the 1965 film of Thomas Hardy's "Far from the Madding Crowd" and is now used as a children's farm. Occasionally it is used for village events.







4 Church Street and Rodden Row (Walk – wheelchair access – care on road)

From your position facing the Tithe Barn you will see an archway on your right (above). Its history is disputed – possibly a gateway into the Abbey courtyard, maybe part of the Strangways manor but most likely an 18th century folly. Walk through the gateway to the road that is **Church Street**. **Take extra care along this often-busy road since it is narrow and has no pavement.**



If you take a short detour to the left you will find an interesting building on your right called **The Gatehouse**.

Much of this building was constructed at the same time as the Abbey and, as its name implies, was one of a number of gateway entrances to the monastic estate. It has many interesting features – note the 14th century buttress on the outside and the arched coach entrance now filled in. Inside there are a plethora of ancient beams and fine carvings, including the Abbot's coat of arms (three keys).

Retracing your steps along Church Street you will see pillars on either side - these are the remains of the gate walls that led

from the gatehouse. Although difficult to see from the road part of the gate wall remains on the left hand side and it has been extended using many remnants of stone from the Abbey, including a "Green Man" carving pictured below.



Continuing you will see the high walls of **The Manor House** on your left. Note also the original stone roof over the front entrance. As the name implies this building was a residence for the Strangways family during the last century although their main ancestral home is at Melbury Sampford.

You now pass the main entrance to St Nicholas' Church on your right and continue past the **Old Vicarage** on your left to reach the junction with the main road.

Opposite, at the end of Rodden Row and on the corner with **Market Street**, is what used to be the **Old Post Office** now one of Abbotsbury's tea rooms.

Watch out for traffic negotiating the sharp bend – coaches and heavy goods vehicles in particular have difficulty rounding the corner and frequently mount the pavement!

Turn right here and enter Rodden Row. On your right **No 19** (pictured below) was the original village school before the new one was built in 1785 (now Strangways Hall in Market Street).



Note the glass in the top window of **No 20** on the opposite side - probably the oldest glass left in the village.

Further along on your left you will find **Dansel**, a Craft Council gallery that specialises in contemporary woodwork, handmade by selected British craftsmen. These buildings were originally designated as "Barns in Strangways Estate Yard" but were converted to their present state in 1979.

A little further up on the same side you will see **Wheelwrights**, which, until the 1940's, was the home and workshop of Sam Mundy, the local wheelwright, village carpenter and undertaker. In the late 1980's it was bought and turned into a gallery by Greg Shepherd and his wife Lesley who were both internationally renowned glassware artists. It was Greg who engraved the glass window that depicts Sam with a cart named "Josie Rose", in celebration of the birth of their first daughter.

On the opposite side of the road is an artist's studio that was once the **Reading Room** where the Victorian inhabitants of Abbotsbury came to access books and newspapers to improve their knowledge of the outside world.

Next door to the right of studio was the original location of the Swan Inn, which was thatched in its previous life, as indeed was the blacksmith then next door. Unfortunately around 1890 a fire occurred in the Smithy's and they both burnt down. The Reading Room, together with the terraced houses now adjacent (nos 7-11) and the new Swan Inn further along just passed the car park, were all built after the fire in the early 1890's.

Take note of the pavements along the left hand side of Rodden Row. The surface of the original paving was of stone flags and cobbles, replaced now by modern materials for understandable reasons of economy and safety. Examples of the original paving surfaces survive in some of the lanes and back streets. The pavement still has attractive stone kerbs but little evidence remains of the taps, which, prior to mains water being introduced, provided residents with their water, supplied directly from the springs in the hills above.

Please cross the road here with care – you are now back at the car park but your tour still has a long way to go.



5 Rosemary Lane, Back Street and Market Street (Walk – wheelchair access – care on road)

To continue the tour turn left from Rodden Row into **Rosemary Lane** (opposite the car park entrance) - a picturesque little street. The first property, **No 1** (pictured above), was one of several bake houses for the village from at least 1903 to 1939. On your right is **East Farm**. This is a traditional Dorset longhouse where a single building originally sufficed for both the family and the livestock. Despite its age evidence in the roof suggests that it has never been thatched.

About halfway up the lane on your left you will see a new house standing some way back from the road. It is in fact three houses but notice how the old traditional building style has been maintained (thatched roof on local stone walls) to fit in with the character of the village. There are other examples of new houses like this elsewhere in the village. If you look straight ahead as you approach the top of Rosemary Lane you will see an old shed which is the remains of the slaughterhouse that used to supply the village butchers.

At the end of the lane turn left into Back Street. The house on your right used to be a coal merchants at one time with the cart shed on the right hand side near the slaughterhouse. A little further on is The Keep (pictured below) - a 1980's construction:



the buildings at street level were once a butcher's shop.

About half way along on the right hand side is Blind Lane - an unmade track that will take you to the top of the Ridgeway where there are truly magnificent views of the village and the Fleet. Beside this lane is a thatched workshop that was used for basket making by the local thatcher who once lived next door (in what is now Spring Cottage).

Back Street is lined by pretty cottages although many of them, like those you see first, are of relatively recent construction. Further down they are 18th century.

On the right you will come across an imposing ecclesiastical building (below). Originally this was the **Congregational Chapel**, built in 1870 on land leased to it by the then Earl of



Ilchester. Records show that Congregationalists had been present here in Abbotsbury from at least 1672 but their final service was held in this building in 1977.

Note the gargoyle on the corner of No. 3! For those who may need it the only public toilet in the village is located at the far end just beyond the chapel – an ugly, flat-roofed building uncharacteristically out of keeping.

You leave Back Street and bear right into **Market Street** and will notice the imposing 19th century building on your right known as **Strangways Hall**. This was once the village school before government financial cuts dictated its closure in 1960. The schoolmaster lived next door in the Old Schoolhouse. Although a nursery school still operates from here, providing an

essential facility for the community, the local school is now in Portesham village some two miles to the east of Abbotsbury. The hall is utilised for many village activities and there are frequent exhibitions and craft fairs held here. Forthcoming events are displayed on the notice board outside of the hall.

Continue along Market Street on this side of the road. The first house was once the village police house where our village bobby lived - note the 'P' etched on the wall right of the gate. Carry on until you reach **Red Lane** where you can still see evidence of the old cobbled pavement. If you walk to the top of the lane you will find an interesting geological feature under survey by the Dorset Geology Society. You can also see exposed iron ore on the left hand side embedded in the rock. Ore was once mined in Abbotsbury but, luckily for us, it was of insufficient quality for economic mining. A railway line was built to carry iron ore from Abbotsbury and pig iron from Portesham to Upwey and thence to Weymouth. Tourism alone could not keep the railway viable and in 1950 it closed. The station (pictured on the previous page) was at the east end of the village, past the houses known as The Glebe. You can walk along the old railway track to Portesham.

Return to Market Street. If you wish to continue your walk proceed to **chapter 6**. For those who wish to conclude the walk for now cross over to **Chapel Lane Stores**, the building opposite was once a fisherman's net store.

The Stores is also a Post Office and was built in 2010 on the site of what was once a dairy farm. Now head back towards the village centre.

As you return along Market Street you will find a variety of craft shops and tea rooms – the very essence of Abbotsbury, and as you turn the corner you will be greeted by the old coaching inn, **The Ilchester Arms**, a classical 17th century building with 18th century modifications. Above you are the colourful representation of the arms of the Earls of Ilchester and over the balcony, rather cluttered with metal supports and a flagpole, there are interesting cast-iron railings and an attractive lamp holder to guide the thirsty customer on dark nights. A useful initiative as you will not find a single street light in Abbotsbury. The Ilchester Arms dominates Market Street as the street opens out to form the centre of the village where, in ages past, there

was once a bustling market that sold everything from ribbons to livestock. 18th century maps also show that there was a market house in the square.

As you return to Rodden Row once more see if you can spot the plaque on the wall on the right directly opposite the tearoom. It warns of the dangers of overloading the bridge - did you even notice the bridge? If not, look again. Now bear left into Rodden Row to return to the car park. A description of Rodden Row can be found in the fourth chapter of this brochure.





6 West Street and St Catherine's Chapel

(Walk - wheelchair access with some narrow pavements)

With Strangways Hall behind you and heading west you enter **West Street**. All along this street you will notice that the cottages are typically built of rubble ironstone with wood or stone lintels over openings and wooden casement windows with vertical boarded doors, two stories high with reed thatched roofs. Most cottages date back to the 18th century or earlier. On the other side of the road you will see a large barn conversion and opposite, at **No 43**, was a bakery once. On Sundays, when no baking was carried out, residents from the village would bring their Sunday roasts to cook in the baker's hot ovens.

Any new buildings in Abbotsbury must blend in with the architecture of the village and a little further on you will see two new houses built in 2005/6. Opposite, next to **No 4**, is where the Methodist church once stood - a private garage stands



there now. The church (pictured above) was built in 1925 and remained there for just 50 years.

Further along the street you will see some excellent stone carvings leaning against **No 36**. This cottage is home to our local stonemason, who specialises in letter cutting, carving and

restoration work. Next you will come to a charming thatched property that was once the pottery. Watch your head if you enter the building since, as with many in Abbotsbury, the overhead beams are dangerously low for 21st century people! Pause also to consider that this little building, and others in the village just like it, once housed entire families from the baby to great-granny! Outside **No 30a** there is an interesting decorative stone water feature (pictured below) that is probably Victorian or later, but never provided residents with their mains water supply. There are stand pipes elsewhere in the street.



Many of the houses in Abbotsbury have been built with fragments of the old Abbey and these are often visible. If you cross over to **No 16** at the west end of the village you will see a particularly superb example above the doorway.

Returning down West Street on this south side you will come across **The Smithy**. With its stone tiled roof, the smithy is still operational and the local farrier can often be seen at work utilising traditional farrier and blacksmith skills.

Next on your right is **West Yard Barn** where you will find the **Ilchester Estate's Leisure and Tourism Office** and some other offices. A little further on you will come across the **VR letterbox** on the wall; a splendid piece of antique Victorian street furniture.

Very shortly you will reach **Hannah's Lane** on your right and it is from here that we leave the village to visit **St Catherine's**



Chapel. This does involve a climb up the hill so wheelchair users and those who do not wish to climb should continue along West Street and return following the final directions in Walk No4.

Turn right into Hannah's Lane and continue pass the allotments on your right. Beyond them you will see the village sports and cricket field. Ahead is the village playground which is suitable for all children up to 99 years of age! At the junction turn left and after passing some farm buildings on the right, pass through the kissing gate also on your right. Now follow the well-worn path up the hill to **St Catherine's Chapel.**

This chapel, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, stands as a sentinel keeping watch over the village of Abbotsbury and serving as a beacon to those at sea. It was built in the 14th century, about the same time as the Tithe Barn, and was possibly used as a chantry by the monks from the abbey to say prayers for the wealthy deceased and as a place of pilgrimage. It probably survived the dissolution of the Abbey because of its importance as a seamark to local fishermen. The medieval strip lynchets etched into the side of the hill are known locally as the **Chapel Rings.**

St Catherine's Chapel is unusual in that it is constructed entirely of stone, from foundation to roof, with walls that are at least four feet thick. Such buildings are rare in Great Britain although there is one other like it in Dorset (St Aldhelm, near St Alban's Head, 6 miles west of Swanage). The roof gives us an insight to how the Tithe Barn would have appeared since that too originally had a stone roof. The chapel has two porches (north and south) to accommodate processions of pilgrims, windows facing in all directions with main ones to east and west and it has a staircase in the northwest corner leading to the turret on the roof. There are three apertures here facing the sea - useful at times of hostilities. All the stone was quarried locally. Non-denominational services are held monthly during the summer. The legend of St. Catherine herself is long and varied and she is the patron saint of sailors, students, philosophers, spinners, wheelwrights, engineers and spinsters. Although St. Catherine was a powerful medieval saint, her legend has been discredited since the 16th century and her saint's day removed from the church's calendar in 1967. Nonetheless the cult continues as you will see by the prayers and messages left in the chapel. Walk 50 meters south from the Chapel to savour the spectacular views before you leave.

Return down the footpath to the kissing gate but proceed straight ahead down **Chapel Lane.** At the end turn right back into **Market Street.**

This is the final part of the Discovering Abbotsbury series - we hope you have found it useful and informative.

